



Westmarc State of the State

Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Friday, February 26, 2010

Let me begin by congratulating WESTMARC on 20 years of leadership and advocacy for the West Valley.

I remember fondly my many years on the Executive Committee and the Board of Directors, -- I'm still an Honorary Director of the Board -- so I have a special, deep appreciation for WESTMARC and the work it does.

And, because of that, I know what Jack Lunsford means to this organization -- to the West Valley -- to the entire state. Thank you, Jack, for your continued leadership. It means a great deal to me and everyone here.

Let me also congratulate Art Othon on just being elected Chairman for 2010 -- and thanks to Mike Woodard for your service as Chairman in 2009.

Throughout my entire 28-year career as a trusted public servant -- A State Legislator; a State Senator; a Maricopa County Supervisor; your Secretary of State and now as your Governor I have been committed to the principles of less government and more freedom.

I have been a consistent truth-teller.

When I inherited this office over one year ago, our State was on the brink of fiscal collapse.

So, what went wrong?

Wrong, is the five high-rolling years before I took office when the system grew government as large as possible.

Wrong, is a state budget deficit of nearly five billion dollars across two fiscal years.

Wrong, is a federal government whose unfunded mandates and sweetheart deals steal Arizona's freedom and threaten to bankrupt our state.

Wrong, is arguing that "the system worked" -- when evidence to the contrary is everywhere and obvious.

OK, so what's RIGHT?

Right, is having the courage to tell the hard truth -- even when it exacts a political cost.

Right, is having a proven track record of acting on behalf of others.

Right, is self-sacrifice ... commitment to the greater good.

Please know, I am working hard to resolve this present crisis.

And let me tell you what we've done so far:

We've made government more efficient, reducing spending by over one billion dollars.

We've streamlined agencies, shrinking the State work force by over ten percent.

We're now transferring back to the Federal Government all non-violent criminal aliens currently housed in the Arizona Department of Corrections.

We will transfer custody of between 300 and 400 inmates this fiscal year and between 600 to 800 inmates in the next fiscal year.

Earlier this month, I accepted President Obama's appointment to his Council of Governors, and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve in a bi-partisan effort on a subject that is at the heart of the role of government -- the security and defense of our Nation.

I intend to be a voice for matters of vital importance to states, such as border security, that are clearly the responsibility of the federal government.

And I look forward to being a strong advocate for Arizona's continued leadership in national defense issues -- and for protecting the interests of those men and women serving in uniform in Arizona, this Nation or in other places around the globe.

As a child raised on a military base, I have a special affection for our Armed Forces and the men and women who serve in it.

As Governor, that affection has deepened as I have toured Arizona's military installations, visited with servicemen and their families, and have spoken with nearby residents and homeowners.

We all know the importance of the Department of Defense and its vital contribution to the Arizona economy. It's a nine point three billion dollar industry -- with recession-proof jobs.

As a result, we all need to be aware of threats to the viability of all the bases in order to take appropriate executive or legislative actions.

As you know, that is exactly what we did earlier this month.

The Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, the Attorney General and I adopted an agreement to resolve a long-standing issue involving residential encroachment around Luke Air Force Base.

Our unified agreement makes clear to the Defense Department that Arizona stands ready for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter mission.

We want to be in the best possible position BEFORE there is another round of base closures -- and we need to continue being a "military friendly" State.

My administration has attracted well over one billion dollars in capital -- and nearly two thousand jobs -- by working closely with the Arizona Department of Commerce.

Recently, I welcomed Sun Tech holdings to Arizona, where they will build their hundred thousand-square-foot North American headquarters as well as a manufacturing plant creating over one hundred and fifty high paying jobs.

And, let me applaud WESTMARC's formation of the West Valley's Greater Maricopa Foreign Trade Zone -- which, when approved by the federal government in the next few months -- will become a key tool for economic development for the entire West Valley.

But, going forward, we must make further, substantial reductions in spending.

The economy has still not recovered, our revenues are still depressed and there is no avoiding this hardship.

More state jobs are going to be shed and services are going to be further curtailed, or lost.

Let me be clear, in the history of this state no other Governor has cut state government more than I have.

As I have stated for over a year, the depth of the problem is so severe that we cannot solve it through cuts alone.

The damage done to education, and public safety would be far too great.

So, in the short run – to prevent this -- we must raise some additional revenue.

Just as with the reductions in spending, the longer we put this off, the less effective it will be in stabilizing our financial position.

I fought for – and won -- thanks to the help of courageous members of both parties in the State Senate and the State House – the right of the VOTERS to decide whether to raise the state sales tax by 1 percent over the next three years.

I've NEVER voted to raise taxes in my entire career.

Not once in 28 years in public service.

Not one time!

But, during that period, I've learned one thing above all else: Doing the RIGHT thing almost always means doing the HARD thing.

I will be a "YES" vote come Election Day.

I'm voting "YES" because it's the right thing to do, and I strongly encourage you to vote "YES" as well.

If we are to preserve the core functions of the Arizona we all love, then Proposition 100 MUST pass.

Prop 100 will keep funding for Arizona's K-12 education system at reasonable levels, keeping students learning and class sizes manageable.

It will go to our universities and community colleges to keep higher education affordable.

It will go to keep felons locked up and it will go to give Arizona's poorest families the help they desperately need.

Without the revenue that a "YES" vote will bring, these programs MUST BE CUT BY MORE THAN ONE BILLION DOLLARS IMMEDIATELY!

That's why Prop 100 is the RIGHT thing to do.

This is a TEMPORARY tax – it will start on June 1st of this year, and come to a dead stop at the end of the day on May 31, 2013.

It will get us through until revenues recover, so that education does not bear the brunt of the downturn.

Please understand, though, that this isn't a cure-all. Despite the fact we've streamlined state government – there are more reductions to come.

We have tax reforms and an aggressive pro-growth job creation program that are ramping up, but still we need Prop 100.

It's a hard request to make, but it's the right one, for our state and for our future.

So, please vote "YES" on Proposition 100.

I did not create this situation -- but I intend to resolve it -- and continue telling the people the truth about it.

Over the long run, I support a responsible pro-growth tax reform package that includes tax cuts.

However -- we must ensure a revenue base that supports vital functions through this downturn.

If we do not act decisively, we will look to the East -- and our Federal Government -- and see our future -- government over-grown -- people over-taxed -- borders over-run -- employers over a barrel -- and freedom ... simply over.

Challenges arise to show us what we're made of as women and men. They're tests of our character. Tests of our values.

My father died when I was 11.

My mother raised two children, opened up a business of her own and never quit.

My mother met every challenge that came her way ...

I am my mother's daughter.

I will never quit.

I will never give in.

I love this state and I care about the people of Arizona ... enough to always tell you the truth.

I am committed to an Arizona revival equal to her spirit -- equal to the promise of her second century.

I am committed to a government that is limited in scope but unrestrained in its goodness.

That is what is expected of all of us.

And, that is exactly what we will do ... Together.

Thank you, may God bless you and your families, and may God bless Arizona.